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British Virgin Islands

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I. Background information

1. The British Virgin Islands[1] is a Non-Self-Governing Territory administered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Territory is located about 100 kilometres east of Puerto Rico and 25 kilometres from the United States Virgin Islands. The Territory comprises an area of 153 square kilometres, a group of some 50 islands, islets and cays that form an archipelago with the United States Virgin Islands, scattered over some 3,445 square kilometres of sea.[2] Twenty of the islands are inhabited. The capital city, Road Town, is located on the largest island, Tortola. The other major islands are Virgin Gorda, Anegada and Jost Van Dyke. For 2006, the population of the Territory was estimated at 26,787 and for 2007 at 27,518 persons.[3]

2. The earliest known inhabitants of the Territory were the Arawaks and the Caribs, indigenous people of the region. The Dutch established the first permanent European settlement on the islands in 1648. In 1666, British planters took control of the islands and the Territory attained the status of a British colony. The planters were granted civil government, constitutional courts, an elected House of Assembly and a partly nominated Legislative Council, which first met in 1772. In 1872, the islands became part of the Federation of the Leeward Islands. In the 1930s and 1940s, British Virgin islanders demanded greater self-governance, which led to the Territory becoming a separately administered colony in 1956.

II. Constitutional, political and legal issues

3. In 2007, the British Virgin Islands adopted a new Constitution negotiated by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the territorial Government. The new Constitution was negotiated as a result of the 1999 United Kingdom Government White Paper on the relationship between the United Kingdom and its Overseas Territories, entitled "Partnership for progress and prosperity: Britain and the Overseas Territories".[4] The Virgin Islands Constitution Order 2007 was put before the United Kingdom Parliament on 14 June 2007 and came into force on 15 June 2007 in accordance with the Order's section 1(2). This replaces the Virgin Islands Constitution Order that was adopted in 1967 and amended in 1976 and 2000.[5]

4. According to the administering Power, the new Constitution has allowed for significant constitutional advancement. The new Constitution clearly defines the role of the Governor and ensures a role for the Government of the British Virgin Islands in all issues that might directly impact the Territory or its population. This

[1] The information contained in the present working paper has been derived from published sources, including those of the territorial Government, and from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the administering Power under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations.

[2] See www.thecommonwealth.org, www.redensigngroup.org.

[3] Information provided by the administering Power on 9 January 2008.

[4] "Partnership for Progress and Prosperity: Britain and the Overseas Territories", White Paper submitted to the House of Commons on 17 March 1999 by the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs; see A/AC.109/1999/1, annex.

[5] Information provided by the administering Power on 9 January 2008 (see A/AC.109/2007/3); see also www.opsi.gov.uk.

includes the establishment of a National Security Council to advise on internal security and a degree of enabling power for the territorial Government to undertake external affairs on its own behalf. The new Constitution also includes a chapter on human rights, enabling the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual to be enshrined in the Constitution, and further provides for the separation of the duties of the Attorney General and the Director of Public Prosecution.[5]

5. Responding to questions before the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee on 3 December 2007, the Premier commented on the recently completed constitutional review exercise. He recalled that the new constitution had come about as a result of a consultative process, in which both the Territorial authorities and the people of the British Virgin Islands had participated. He pointed out that while certain elements would need "mopping up", they could be addressed "in three or four years by making minor amendments". He strongly emphasized the need for a greater level of consultation with the Territory in the question of the appointment of a Governor, as well as on the matter of ratification of treaties which applied to the Territory. In addition, he cited a need for a reformed judicial and legal commission, as well as for the appointment of a commissioner to review the question of electoral boundaries.[6]

6. As under the previous Constitution, the administering Power appoints a Governor with responsibilities for defence, internal security, external affairs, public service and the administration of the courts; the Governor retains legislative powers as necessary to exercise special responsibilities. In the areas of internal security and external affairs, the new Constitution provides for the territorial Government to have formal input, allowing for greater sharing of these responsibilities.[3] Section 60(1) of the Constitution states that the Governor shall keep the Premier fully informed concerning the general conduct of the aforementioned matters, and that the Premier may request information in respect of any particular matter.[7]

7. The new Constitution provides, under section 47, for the introduction of a cabinet style of Government, reflecting, according to the administering Power, the increased level of autonomy and responsibility resting with the democratically elected representatives. Under the new arrangements, the Executive Council has been replaced by a Cabinet, the Chief Minister replaced by a Premier, and the Legislative Council replaced by a House of Assembly. The Cabinet consists of the Premier (appointed by the Governor from among the elected members of the House of Assembly), four other Ministers (appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Premier) and one ex officio member (the Attorney General). Section 47(3) of the new Constitution states that the Cabinet shall have responsibility for the formulation of policy, including directing the implementation of such policy, insofar as it relates to every aspect of Government, except those matters for which the Governor has special responsibility under section 60, and the Cabinet shall be collectively responsible to the House of Assembly for such policies and their implementation.

8. Under the new Constitution, the Governor presides at meetings of the Cabinet, while both the Governor and the Premier are entitled to inscribe items on the agenda. The Premier further exercises responsibility for summoning public officers to the Council: section 49(4) states that the Cabinet Secretary, the Governor and the

[6] (See http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmfaff/uc147-i/uc14702.htm.)

[7] www.opsi.gov.uk.

Premier shall form a Cabinet Steering Group for the purpose of setting the agenda of the Cabinet; the Governor and the Premier shall each be entitled to inscribe items on the agenda and the Cabinet Secretary shall comply accordingly. Section 50(1) states that whenever any business before the Cabinet renders the presence of a public officer desirable, the Premier may summon such public officer to a meeting of the Cabinet; and the Premier shall summon such an officer if the Governor, acting at his or her discretion, so requests.

9. As under the previous Constitution's provision for the Legislative Council, the new House of Assembly consists of a Speaker, the Attorney General as an ex officio member and 13 elected members (9 members from one-member electoral districts and 4 members representing the Territory at large).

10. There are four political parties in the Territory: the Virgin Islands Party (VIP), founded in 1971; the United Party (UP), founded in 1966; the Concerned Citizens' Movement (CCM), founded in 1994 as a successor to the Independent People's Movement; and the National Democratic Party (NDP), founded in 1998. General elections must be held at least once every four years. Candidates are elected based on a simple majority.

11. Persons voting must be 18 years of age or over and have "belonger status", a term which the Constitution applies to a person deemed to belong to the Territory. It is estimated that some 45 per cent of the population has "belonger status", which includes the right to work without a permit and the right to vote. A person has to live and reside continuously in the Territory for 20 years before he or she may apply for permanent residence. After obtaining permanent residence, he or she may apply to become a belonger.[8] The British Overseas Territories Act 2002 granted the right of full British citizenship to all inhabitants of its Territories.

12. In the last general election, held on 20 August 2007, the Virgin Islands Party won 10 of the 13 seats in the House of Assembly and subsequently formed the Government, with Ralph T. O'Neal as Premier. The next general election is scheduled for September 2011.

13. The Governor of the British Virgin Islands, David Pearey, took office on 18 April 2006.

14. The law of the British Virgin Islands comprises common law of England, locally enacted legislation, and imperial legislation. Justice is administered by the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, based in Saint Lucia, which consists of two divisions: the High Court of Justice and the Court of Appeal. There are two resident High Court Judges, and a visiting Court of Appeal, which comprises the Chief Justice and two judges of appeal and sits twice a year in the Territory. There is also a Magistrate's Court, which hears prescribed civil and criminal cases, as well as a Juvenile Court and a Court of Summary Jurisdiction. The United Kingdom Privy Council is the final court of appeal.

[8] (See http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmfaff/uc147-i/uc14702.htm.)

III. Budget

15. The 2007 budget estimates, amounting to $254 million, are still in effect, while the estimates for 2008 were being formulated at the time the present working paper was being prepared. The Government continues to be the responsible steward of public sector finance, first by funding capital expenditures from operating surpluses, where feasible, and also by remaining in compliance with the borrowing guidelines agreed with the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. As at mid-December 2007, there was an overall surplus of over $38 million, double the amount at the same time the previous year.[9]

IV. Economic conditions

A. General

16. The economy of the British Virgin Islands is based on tourism and offshore financial services, which contribute approximately half of the gross domestic product (GDP). Since 1959, the legal tender of the British Virgin Islands has been the United States dollar.[3]

17. In 2006, GDP was estimated at $1 billion, representing an estimated increase of 11 per cent over the 2005 amount of $940 million. Tourism and offshore financial services represented approximately 30.7 per cent and 17.9 per cent of GDP, respectively. Per capita GDP was estimated at $36,417 in 2006.[3]

18. It is expected that the GDP will be well over $1 billion by the end of 2007, with supporting sectors such as the construction sector contributing more than $50 million as a result of continued development of infrastructure. According to observed trends, 2007 has been identified as the year marked by the highest ever GDP growth, which shall equal some 12.9 per cent, largely attributable to tourism, financial services and the anticipated commencement of several large investment projects. Other industries which have positively impacted the Territory's economy are construction, fishing, livestock, agriculture and rum production.[10]

19. In June 2007, the Chief Minister said that the territorial Government's plans effective at that time could be expected to help the continued development of the tourism and offshore sectors through strengthening legislation and regulatory controls. The strategy of attracting inward investment while supporting private sector enterprise would also continue.[11]

20. As previously reported, the principal trading partners of the Territory are the United States of America, Puerto Rico, States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the United Kingdom. Imports consisted mostly of food, machinery and fuel.[12]

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[9] Information provided by the administering Power on 9 January 2008 (A/AC.109/2007/3, para. 16).

[10] Information provided by the administering Power on 9 January 2008; Chief Minister, State of the Territory Address, 5 June 2007.

[11] Chief Minister, State of the Territory Address, 5 June 2007.

[12] A/AC.109/2007/3.

B. Agriculture, fisheries and shipping

21. Agriculture and fishing currently account for less than 1 per cent of GDP, and most food requirements are met through imports. Around 800 hectares are under cultivation and 4,000 hectares in pasture. The main crops are fruit and vegetables, which are produced both for local consumption and for export to the United States Virgin Islands.[3]

22. The territorial Government's Department of Agriculture has seen an approximate 1 per cent increase in food production in the Territory during the reporting period, especially in bananas, some vegetables and meats. In an effort to improve its services, the Department has focused on various new initiatives, including the provision of subsidy grants to farmers, with special attention given to the pig industry. Other initiatives include improving livestock breeds and supporting the ongoing Farmers' Assistance Programme through which farmers are assisted with farming materials and the marketing of produce. It is expected that new technologies, such as advanced greenhouses will be introduced.[3]

23. The Territory's Fisheries Act of 1997 and Fisheries Regulations of 2003 govern fishing in the British Virgin Islands. Fishing mainly serves the local market. The two main types of fisheries in the Territory are small-scale commercial and recreational fisheries. There is also an offshore longline pelagic fishery with only one longline vessel in operation. Annual total fish landings range from 100 to 300 tons, and reef fish species comprise about 60 per cent of the landings. Commercial fisheries comprise about 250 boats, with the majority of the fishermen owning their fishing gear. Most fishers market their own catch at various places within the Territory, with an appreciable number of them selling their catch directly to hotels and restaurants and a small number to the British Virgin Islands Fishing Company.[3]

C. Tourism

24. Rich vegetation, unspoiled beaches, yachting marinas and fine coral reefs make the British Virgin Islands a natural tourist destination. High-end tourism continues to be the single most important economic sector for the Territory. There were an estimated 888,660 tourist arrivals in 2007, an increase of 7.6 per cent over the previous year. Cruise ship passenger arrivals of 470,801 persons still represent the main category of visitor to the territory, accounting for approximately 53 per cent of total arrivals in 2007. Stopover tourists and excursion visitors accounted for 42 and 5 per cent respectively.[3]

25. Various high-end tourist developments are under way, with a planned increase of over 1,000 hotel rooms over the next seven years, representing new investment valued at over $500 million. At the same time, the Tourist Board of the British Virgin Islands continues its efforts towards improving standards with focused customer training programmes, as well as a new initiative to improve basic physical standards of accommodation facilities.[3]

D. Financial services

26. Since its inception in 2002, the Financial Services Commission has been functioning as an autonomous regulatory authority responsible for the regulation, supervision and inspection of all financial services in and from within the British

Virgin Islands. The British Virgin Islands Business Companies Act of 2006 has helped position the British Virgin Islands as a leader in the registration of corporate structures worldwide. The Financial Services Commission, through the Registry of Corporate Affairs, continues to be one of the major revenue-generating engines in the Territory. There were 65,284 new companies registered in 2006. During the second quarter of 2007, there were 17,803 company incorporations, 28 limited partnership formations and 1,043 dissolutions.[3]

27. Speaking before the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee on 3 December 2007 in reply to a question on the regulation of the financial industries, the Premier elaborated on the pertinent arrangements in place in the British Virgin Islands, in particular, the Financial Services Commission, stating, inter alia:

> "The managing director of the Financial Services Commission keeps the Governor informed about how matters are going. The Commission meets once a year with the Cabinet to provide, in addition to the annual report, an update and overview of what is happening and what is likely to happen. We propose now to change that, so that the Commission will meet not only with the Cabinet but with the House of Assembly. It is the House of Assembly which has to pass the laws. Unless it has good insight and understands why things are done, and why laws must be passed, there could be difficulties. For years now, the Legislative Council, as it was formerly called, has gone on record as saying that when it comes to the financial services and legislation, there has been no division at all. It realized the importance of having adequate legislation to support the industry."[13]

E. Construction planning, development and public works

28. Physical planning in the British Virgin Islands is governed by the Physical Planning Act of 2004, under which all development in the Territory requires approval from the territorial Government. During the period under consideration, the Government served 54 compliance notices and had zero cases going before the court. During 2007, 335 development, 157 subdivision and approximately 30 other applications were processed. The territorial plan, determining land use activities and identifying undeveloped areas, is expected to be revised and updated to cover the period 2010-2030.[3]

29. The British Virgin Islands Electricity Corporation completed phase four of its development plan to improve the electricity supply to the Territory by acquiring four new engines that are expected to reduce the likelihood of power failures. There have been challenges associated with maintaining a reliable electricity supply over the past years, but with the installation of these engines there will be over 40 megawatts of capacity available at any time. Normally, 28 megawatts are required.[14]

30. As previously reported, the Water and Sewerage Department of the Territory has about 8,000 customers who are provided water from 10 active reservoirs and

[13] (See http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmfaff/uc147-i/uc14702.htm.)

[14] Information provided by the administering Power on 9 January 2008; The BVI Beacon, http://bvibeacon.com, 18 December 2007.

8 desalination plants. The plants are owned by three private companies from which the Government buys the water.

F. Transport and communications

31. The British Virgin Islands has over 200 kilometres of surfaced roads. Direct shipping services operate from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and the Netherlands. A deepwater harbour exists in Road Town. Regular ferry service links Tortola with some of the other islands and with St. Thomas of the United States Virgin Islands. New docks have been constructed at Anegada, Jost Van Dyke, Trellis Bay and Cane Garden Bay.[15]

32. There are three international airports in the British Virgin Islands, served by 15 airlines. The territorial Government intends to expand air service capacity to Virgin Gorda and inaugurate a new seaplane facility at Gun Creek to allow service to St. Thomas, San Juan and additional destinations.[16]

33. Throughout 2007, the Ministry of Communications and Works engaged in a number of road improvement projects, including the construction of retaining walls in the Ballast Bay area, the reconstruction of the bridge in Road Town between the Sunday Morning Well and the Band Stand, as well as the Carrot Bay Bridge. Improvement of drainage systems has involved the cleaning and installation of drainage structures in Duff's Bottom, Sea Cow's Bay, Greenland and Road Town, partially with the help of the Disaster and Risk Reduction Programme of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States.[3]

34. The British company Cable & Wireless, along with the only mobile provider in the British Virgin Islands, CCT Global Communications, have signed an interconnection agreement Memorandum of understanding. The understanding is considered the final milestone prior to the anticipated liberalization of the telecommunications market. For its part, the Caribbean mobile operator Digicel announced that it has been granted a mobile licence to operate in the Territory.[3]

V. Social conditions

A. General

35. Financial assistance is provided for those who need it through the Social Security Board, a statutory body that falls under the Ministry of Finance. It provides for sickness and maternity benefits, as well as pensions. According to the administering Power, the Social Development Department also provides grants and other assistance to persons who are in need of assistance through the Public assistance committee. This is a nine-member committee which is appointed by the Cabinet. Other programmes that are administered by the Social Development Department include Elderly and disability services, Family and children services, Rainbow children's home, Social and legal aid, and Community development. Work

[15] Chief Minister, State of the Territory Address, 5 June 2007.

[16] Chief Minister, State of the Territory Address, 5 June 2007 (see www.caribbeannetnews.com) 4 January 2008.

on a social services centre in Cane Garden Bay is expected to be completed by the end of March 2008.[3]

36. According to the territorial Government, social security pensions have been increased for all persons 65 years and older, and the eligibility for pension benefits has been extended to workers who are paid by the day.[17]

B. Labour

37. The labour force of 16,939 workers (2006) is mostly engaged in Government employment (31.2 per cent), tourism (15.4 per cent) and construction (8.4 per cent). According to the Government Development Planning Unit, the unemployment rate in the British Virgin Islands was 3.1 per cent for 2006.[3]

C. Education

38. Education is free and compulsory in the British Virgin Islands for children between the ages of 5 and 16 years. There are 18 public and 11 private primary schools in the Territory, on Tortola, Anegada, Virgin Gorda and Jost Van Dyke. Secondary education, "A" level (from 12 to 16 years), is also free. There are seven high schools, four private and three public. The community college at Paraquita Bay, the H. Lavity Stoutt Community College, has begun offering free tuition.[3]

39. Under the national curriculum project, substantial modernization of the educational system is ongoing. Language arts, mathematics and integrated science materials are currently being field-tested and the educational standards for the remaining subjects are to be elaborated. An implementation plan for the curricula for mathematics, language arts and integrated science is expected to be designed in 2008. Field testing for social science, arts (music and fine arts) and physical education will begin during the 2008-2009 school year. Major steps in education include the increase by 50 per cent of British Virgin Islands scholarship grants for higher degrees abroad and the supply of new computers to every school in the Territory.[3]

D. Public health

40. The Territory's Health Services Authority, an autonomous corporate body, was established in 2005, when the British Virgin Islands Health Services Act was passed, to manage all public health-care delivery services. According to the administering Power, the territorial Government still continues to be the major funding source for the Authority. At the same time, the British Virgin Islands Health Services Authority has made a concerted effort to improve its revenue generation and collection, to facilitate a transition from almost total reliance on Government funding towards functioning as an autonomous body with no or limited public funds.[18]

41. In accordance with the 1976 Public Health Act, which is the statutory framework for protecting and promoting the population's health, Government health

[17] Chief Minister, State of the Territory Address, 5 June 2007.

[18] (See A/AC.109/2007/3.)

services are provided free at the point of use to certain groups, such as full-time schoolchildren, nursing mothers, the elderly, the mentally ill, health workers, firefighters, the police, prisoners and prison officers. The territorial Government has begun efforts to establish a national health insurance programme. [19]

42. Currently there are 58 physicians and 9 dentists actively practising in the Territory, of whom 31 physicians and 2 dentists are employed in the public sector, and 27 physicians and 7 dentists in the private sector. The Territory has one 44-bed public hospital (Peebles Hospital), one referral health centre at Road Town and a network of 10 district clinics, as well as two health posts. Private health care is provided by one hospital (Bougainvillea Clinic), three dental surgeries, and four medical complexes, of which three are located on Tortola and one on Virgin Gorda.

43. During 2005-2006, the construction of the hospital annex was completed and the first CAT scan machine was installed with the support of the Social Security Board. In 2007, a helipad in Road Town was completed for medical transport purposes and has become fully functional. A $63.9 million contract to build a new public hospital was signed in January 2007[20] and the contractor mobilized on-site in early March 2007. The new 128-bed hospital facility is being constructed behind the existing hospital and will connect to the hospital annex.[21]

44. At the end of November 2007, 85 AIDS-infected persons had been reported to the Ministry of Health and Social Development of whom 27 have died. There are 58 persons between the ages of 20 and 67 years residing in the British Virgin Islands who are reported to be HIV-infected. The Annual National Summit for Youth on HIV-AIDS, which started in 2004, reportedly continues to be a meaningful initiative for secondary level students. There has been significant improvement in the surveillance of HIV throughout the public and private health sectors, which helps to provide baseline data and to improve monitoring of the disease.[3]

E. Crime, security and public safety

45. During the early 2000s, the increased level of crime in the Territory became a matter of concern and was brought to the attention of the Legislative Council. The subsequent discussion brought to light the inadequacy of the legal framework, law enforcement and criminal justice system in the Territory, concerns which are gradually being addressed, including personnel and other changes at the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force, as previously reported.[22]

46. According to the administering Power, problems associated with drug trafficking are potentially the most serious threat to stability in the British Virgin Islands. The Territory is a major target for traffickers due to its numerous small uninhabited islands. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has provided a police launch, and jointly funds with the territorial Government a number of British personnel, as well as anti-narcotics equipment to assist in

[19] Chief Minister, State of the Territory Address, 5 June 2007.

[20] Information transmitted by the administering Power, 15 January 2007; see also www.caribbeannetnews.com, 19 and 24 January 2007.

[21] Information provided by the administering Power on 9 January 2008; Chief Minister, State of the Territory Address, 5 June 2007.

[22] A/AC.109/2007/3.

combating drug offences. The British Virgin Islands has a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty with the United States and close cooperation with their law enforcement agencies. The Territory's legislation on money-laundering covers all crimes, not just drug-related crimes.[23]

47. Furthermore, fishing in the British Virgin Islands territorial waters by fishermen from nearby islands has created conflicts from time to time. Sports fishing in the British Virgin Islands continues to be a major attraction for many tourists, as well as for neighbouring fishermen. A maritime demarcation boundary line between the British Virgin Islands and the United States Virgin Islands was established between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States in 1975.[24]

48. The Director of the recently launched Virgin Islands Shipping Registry confirmed that the Government of the British Virgin Islands is committed to ensuring that ship and company security officers in the Territory are accredited in accordance with the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code.[25]

VI. Environment

49. Soil erosion and sedimentation of the marine environment remain a major problem affecting the marine and terrestrial environment in the British Virgin Islands. The environmental impact assessment requirement under the Physical Planning Act of 2004 was applied to several development applications during the reporting period. Major projects included in the process were Scrub Island Development; Mooring Expansion Project; Lambert Beach Development; and Sandcastle Development. In addition to an initial public hearing, the developers were brought together with Government officials quarterly to report on project compliance.[3]

50. The British Virgin Islands has acceded to several global multilateral environmental agreements, including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Ramsar Wetlands Convention. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora has been incorporated into local enabling legislation, but the other environmental conventions and treaties remain only as agreed instruments. In order to address this concern, a comprehensive environment and conservation of biodiversity bill is under preparation with assistance from the United Nations Environment Programme and is expected to be subject to review and possible enactment in 2008.[3]

51. Recognizing that global climate change might have a significant potential impact, the British Virgin Islands participated in several regional meetings in 2006 and 2007 to help plan to reduce the related risks and impacts, as well as to access funds and resources, including in the areas of capacity-building and information-sharing.[3]

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[23] BVI profile, www.fco.gov.uk.

[24] Information provided by the administering Power on 9 January 2008; www.caribbeannetnews.com, 7 November 2007.

[25] www.caribbeannetnews.com, 10 January 2008.

VII. Relations with international organizations and partners

A. United Nations system

52. The British Virgin Islands has associate membership in the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The National Commission for UNESCO collaborates with UNESCO in the areas of institution- and capacity-building. A Caribbean-wide catastrophe insurance pool established by the World Bank has acquired $47 million in funds to assist the Caribbean, including the British Virgin Islands, in the event of a hurricane or earthquake.[26]

53. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and those Overseas Territories represented at the 2007 Consultative Council, including the British Virgin Islands, agreed to extend the United Nations Convention Against Corruption to all the Overseas Territories at the earliest opportunity. They also set a date of June 2008 for the extension of ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and December 2008 for the extension of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to all the Overseas Territories.[27]

B. Regional organizations and other partners

54. The Territory is an associate member of CARICOM and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States. The Territory is a borrowing member of the Caribbean Development Bank.

55. As a Non-Self-Governing Territory of the United Kingdom, the British Virgin Islands is associated with the European Union (EU) but is not a part of it.[28] The Territory is a signatory of agreements that provide for development assistance from the EU, on the basis of performance-based partnerships.

56. The territorial Government's International Affairs Secretariat coordinates efforts to strengthen the Territory's relationship with "British Virgin Islands Friends". Also, the question of the continued functioning of the Inter Virgin Islands Council was addressed during the visit of Governor John P. DeJongh of the United States Virgin Islands to the British Virgin Islands on 15 March 2007, when he underscored his commitment to seeing the Council continue to perform its vital role of addressing issues that are of concern to the two Territories. During a meeting with the Chief Minister, several areas of mutual interest and benefit for continued cooperation were identified.[29]

57. At a conference of the International Organization of Securities Commissions held in 2007, the British Virgin Islands Financial Services Commission was welcomed as an ordinary member in recognition of its international cooperation

[26] UPI, 27 February 2007.
[27] www.fco.gov.uk, press release, 6 December 2007.
[28] See European Union publication entitled "Caribbean Economic Partnership Agreement", 2006.
[29] http://www.governordejongh.com/news/archive/2007/03/031506-2.html.

framework and its long-standing commitment to comply fully with international standards.[30]

VIII. Future status of the Territory

A. Position of the territorial Government

58. The position of the territorial Government regarding the future status of the British Virgin Islands is reflected under section II on constitutional issues.

B. Position of the administering Power

59. In a statement made on 11 October 2007 before the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, the representative of the United Kingdom said, inter alia, that "her Government, as administering Power for ten Non-Self-Governing Territories, gave every help and encouragement to those Territories which wished to proceed to independence, where that was an option. Her Government and its overseas territories continued to work towards the shared goals of security, stability and sustainable political and economic development, democracy, good governance and the rule of law. ... Her Government carefully considered all proposals for constitutional change received from the Territories."[31]

60. As previously reported,[32] in a statement made on 24 April 2006, the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Minister took stock of the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Overseas Territories seven years on from the 1999 White Paper entitled "Partnership for Progress and Prosperity: Britain and the Overseas Territories".[33] An elaboration of the position of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on alternative forms of relationship, as set out in General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV), has been previously provided.[34]

C. Action by the General Assembly

61. On 17 December 2007, the General Assembly adopted without a vote resolutions 62/118 A and B, section IV of which concerns the British Virgin Islands. Under that section's operative paragraphs, the General Assembly:

> "1. *Welcomes* the negotiations on constitutional advancement and balance of authority between the administering Power and the territorial Government during 2006-2007 resulting in the draft constitution that was unanimously passed by the Legislative Council of the Territory in May 2007;

[30] BVI Financial Services Commission, press release, 13 April 2007.
[31] A/C.4/62/SR.5.
[32] A/AC.109/2007/3.
[33] (See A/AC.109/1999/1, annex.)
[34] A/AC.109/2007/3.

"2. *Also welcomes* the efforts made by the territorial Government to focus the economic base of the Territory more on local ownership and on professional service industries other than financial services;

"3. *Further welcomes* the ongoing work of the Inter-Virgin Islands Council between the elected Governments of the British Virgin Islands and the United States Virgin Islands as a mechanism for functional cooperation between the two neighbouring Territories;".